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The President's Message and the Action of Congress.

President McKinley entered upon his peace policy in reference to Cuba with all sincerity. He believed that if Congress would follow his lead he could bring to an end the wretched condition of things there without resort to war. But from the very beginning of his administration he had the steady and often bitter opposition of a large number of members of both houses of Congress. These men were for immediate war, if Spain would not instantly yield to all the demands of our government — demands which would have been insolent in the extreme, if these Congressmen had had the making of them.

The President was fully aware that after our government, in the name of humanity or for whatever reason, had once taken hold of the matter war might at last come about. But he had determined to keep it in the background as far out of sight as possible, while he in a respectful and pacific way brought steady pressure to bear upon the Spanish government to put an end to the horrors of the Cuban struggle, and to give the Cuban people real self-government. Acting in this way, from the time he became President up to the time when he prepared his message of the 11th of April, he had secured five important concessions from Spain — real concessions, if not as complete as he would have liked. He was so certain of ultimate success that, even after negotiations had stopped, he held back his message some days with the hope of further concessions, though the belligerent men in Congress were berating him in the most disgraceful way.

At the last moment before the message went in, a sixth concession was made, that of the cessation of hostilities. This did not amount to an armistice, it was angrily said. But does anyone believe that if the President had had more time, if the war men in Congress had not virtually compelled him to turn the matter over to them, he would not have secured a real armistice, the ultimate withdrawal of the Spanish forces, and the setting up of at least an absolutely autonomous government? Six important concessions made by an independent nation, in regard to affairs on a portion of her own territory, are sufficient proof that she would ultimately have yielded everything except her suzerainty over the island, and probably that. All this could have been

brought about without battle, without even the disturbance of diplomatic relations. But all this was made impossible by the determination of Congress deliberately to shut the door to a peaceful termination of the negotiations.

After the President became convinced that Congress could not longer be restrained, he asked in his message that the power of armed intervention be placed in his hands. But he put this in such a way that, with the power of armed intervention in his hands, he could still have followed his own policy, until he had become convinced that it was absolutely hopeless. If Congress had followed the course suggested in his message, he would, there is every reason to believe, have been able to turn the cessation of hostilities into a real armistice and ultimately to have secured the self-government of the Cuban people. From their hurried, heated conduct, there is reason to believe that Congressmen had the strongest fear that he would be able in a short time to accomplish just this thing, and that therefore, being determined on war, either from the mere desire to fight or out of vengeance for the destruction of the Maine, they refused to follow him, and forced him to follow them.

It is from this point of view that the action of Congress is to be judged, and will be judged in after years. In truth, it has already been so judged and severely condemned by a large section of our people and almost universally abroad. The nation might have had peace, with the freedom and prosperity of Cuba; these men determined that war should be used for the freeing of the island, with all the attendant horrors, griefs and burdens of war. However the conflict with Spain may turn out, whether the war be brief or long-continued, whether the loss and distress be little or much, the guilt of these men will remain just the same, and the shame and disgrace will have to be borne by the nation. A good end never justifies a bad means, least of all when a good means is at hand and already working out the desired result.

It is cause for gratitude that there were a few men in Congress who saw clearly the real heart of the situation and refused "to do ought against conscience," though surrounded by hissing, howling galleries, and the still more disgraceful hissing and howling of their colleagues on the floor. These men have made themselves immortal, whatever may be

the immediate action of their constituents at home, or of the jingo newspapers which are so loud in condemning them.

What makes the action of Congress so unworthy of the nation and its history is as much the manner of its action as the needlessness thereof. A matter of the gravest moment, both for the present and the future, involving millions of money and the possible loss of many thousands of lives, with numberless other attendant misfortunes, was rushed through with the relentless haste of a lynching mob. No time was taken or allowed for discussion. Members asked for time—had to ask permission to exercise their constitutional right of speech—to express their opposition to the course being pursued. They were howled down and forced into silence. And all this in the name of humanity, liberty and independence!

If we believed that Congress, either in the matter or the manner of its recent action, represented the great masses of the people of the nation, we should greatly despair of the future of the country. We believe just the contrary. The President's policy was the policy which the people wished pursued. The President ought to have stood by it and have let Congress bear the sole responsibility of the course which it took. We refuse to believe that the spirit of vengeance or the desire for war, so apparent in Congress, were the prevailing spirit of the nation. Multitudes of men and women in all parts of the land will look with profound sadness on the spectacle of our country plunging headlong into war with Spain, when a little more patience and self-restraint might have won a great and bloodless victory for humanity.

If thou hadst known, O Congress, even thou, in this thy day, the things which make for thy honor! But now they are hidden from thine eyes!

War in the Blood.

"War in the air." This expression has often been heard during the past weeks of excitement. It has been uttered as if it were an explanation of the extraordinary phenomenon, which we have been compelled to witness, of a great multitude in the nation shouting impatiently, almost angrily for a war of vengeance, of punishment, against Spain.

What does "war in the air" mean? Who put it there? Whence came the feverishness, the growing

conviction that war was inevitable, that it might as well be plunged into first as last? How did it happen that, as time went on, people who at first were opposed to war and talked vigorously against it, finally threw away their opposition and went over in multitudes to the side of those who were clamoring for it and seemed fascinated at the thought of it?

This was a noticeable feature of the development of events from the time of the report of the Maine court of inquiry to the time of the arrival of Consul-General Lee in Washington and the ignominious scene in the House of Representatives a little later. The intellectual and moral convictions of many persons seem to have given way under the pressure of some influence of which they could have given no account to themselves. The desire to fight, or rather to have somebody else fight, to have vengeance for the Maine, to have a vast bloody spectacle on land or sea, spread widely over the nation. People began even to talk of a righteous, a "holy" war, out of respect no doubt to their consciences which would not be altogether still. We do not include in this class many who all along believed that the United States had a solemn duty to perform in putting an end to Spanish inhumanities in Cuba. This class of citizens, whatever may be thought of their reasoning, had no disposition to glorify war, or to rush recklessly into bloodshed.

This degeneration of sentiment,—for it was nothing less,—was not brought about by the pressure of public opinion. Public opinion, at least as shown in private conversation where men spoke out their true convictions, was more opposed to war with Spain than in favor of it. This larger, better part of public sentiment was everywhere indignant at the unblushing conduct of the sensational papers and spoke out against it in tones of the severest condemnation. But as time went on, and the negotiations with Spain tarried, and war preparations increased, and the war party in Congress became more and more aggressive, the numbers of those who believed that a peace policy ought to be followed out consistently to the end and that in this way the wishes of this country in regard to Cuba might be attained, became fewer and fewer.

To say that "war in the air" brought this on is to say nothing. The truth is that it was war in the blood, sowed thick there a generation ago. One might be inclined to attribute the phenomenon to the